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## The Decorator and Furnisher.

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IN connection with the forthcoming Centennial of Washington's Inauguration it is proposed to hold during the month of April an exhibition of historical portraits and a memorial exhibition of Washington relics, in the Metropolitan Museum. The portraits will be limited to portraits of Washington and his Cabinet, and to members of the first Congress under the Constitution; and it is expected that the chair that stood in Federal Hall, which Washington occupied as first President, the Bible used at the Inauguration, and other authenticated relics will be exhibited. Among the portraits promised, is one of George Washington, painted by Gilbert Stuart, at Mount Vernon, in 1797, and given by Washington to Alexander Hamilton. This portrait has never been photographed or engraved, and is a beautiful picture. It is now owned by Hamilton's grandson, Alexander Hamilton, of New York. The Art Committee will be glad to hear from any of our readers who possess portraits or other articles coming within the limits of the exhibition.

WE mentioned last month the two-ton gem as the great piece of agatized wood on exhibition at Tiffany's was called. In Mineral Resources of the United States for 1887, Mr. G. F. Kunz gives some account of this beautiful decorative material: "At Sioux Falls, Dak., the company that is cutting and polishing the agatized wood from Arizona and the quartzite found at Sioux Falls has, after a great deal of experimenting, perfected the methods of sawing and polishing hard materials so as greatly to reduce the cost. Among the objects produced were a round column 11½ inches wide and 21 inches high, cut transversely across the tree, so that the heart was visible on two sides of it, with the radiations in all directions; and sections measuring 23, 24, 17½ and 13 inches in diameter, respectively, so highly polished that when turned with the back to the light they form a perfect mirror. All the specimens were brilliant in color and rivaled any work ever done in hard materials. The company has removed from the forest 180 tons of material, and 20 tons of sections have been ground down to show its characteristic beauties. Perhaps \$100,000 worth is now undergoing the cutting and polishing process."

IT has been charged that economical progress in the production of furniture, whilst supplying wants cheaply and putting within the reach of all an appearance of luxury and a certain degree of comfort, separates the consumer from original

## THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

work, trivialises forms, and habituates people to desire less objects of pure and true taste than objects that make the greatest effect. We hold, however, that no harm is done. Merely gaudy articles soon tire and yield a lesson never forgotten. Besides examples abound of elegant though more costly articles, and these of fine workmanship, which tend to raise the standard of taste, and are appreciated if not purchased by those who only buy the cheaper kinds owing to limited means; but really, and this is to the credit of a number of our furniture manufacturers, a good proportion of the cheap kinds are at once simple and graceful and free from false meretricious features; there is ample room, however, for varied original designs.

LET us take a fair view of the decoration of Pompeian structures, referred to so often by art critics for denunciation or examples of treatment, premising that we do not consider it as a sample in the period of its existence as that prevailing in Italian cities. Pompeii was a seaside resort for pleasure seekers. This accounts for the trifling treatment of decoration, for the whimsically odd perspective views, for the absence of grace and dignity, for the efforts to extend the apparent bounds of rooms by calling in the aid of illusions, these aiding prevalent sensations of life chiefly spent in the open air. In the coloring there was a large use of white lines, not only for defining, but for rendering it possible to use those strong masses of bright color that could be brought in contact in figures presented with excessive emphasis and sharp precision. The handling of the colors and the disposition of the designs are indicative of trained experience, the decorative artist driving home the idea of the designs with force, producing a very different result from more mechanical execution.

THE highly artistic forms in which brass articles are produced are calculated to stimulate public demand. The metal assortments well with rich furnishings and enlivens the most sombre apartments. Variety of appearance is provided in artificial tints, such as golden orange, grayish green, violet, moire, olive and olive green, to which is to be added the effect of fire gilding. Both antique and fanciful styles are brought out in general constructive shapes and raised work. Most of the productions aim at combining beauty and utility. Many mediæval caprices are produced in brass ornaments. The endless devices include mythological renderings, flower and leaf forms, strap and scroll work, cartouches, heroic trophies and figures, such as fawns, satyrs and grotesques. In furniture we have small tables, bedsteads, fire-screen frames with simple, but ingenious interlacements, chandeliers, candelabra and floor lamps, brackets, picture and mirror frames and fire-dogs with other numerous elegances. In sleeping apartments brass is enticingly attractive. We are glad to see such high artistic skill devoted to its manipulation.

DRESSING of store windows is a branch of decoration which is becoming more artistic through the effect of growing taste and emulation. Store-keepers who visited Paris the past season have evidently brought back new and stylish suggestions of arrangement. The back-ground and the floor of the window entresol are essential points for affording relief in color in selling off the goods. For the former there are rich silk curtains of suitable lines, sometimes lace hangings; for the latter velvet plushes. In certain instances looped curtains are introduced, and mirrors are placed at sides to furnish double reflections. In the attractive arrangement of articles, good taste as to the proper harmonies and contrasts of colors are indispensable.

IN Chicago and other western cities it is a practice with some large upholstery dealers to fit up expressly on their premises furnished dining, setting and other rooms to afford suggestions to customers about to furnish other houses, including various styles of decorative work on walls. The examples we have seen do not incline us to favor the practice. The apartments which we have seen had about them a heavy overloaded aspect, and were too crowded through the desire to show off this and that article.

THERE was little of harmony in the bringing together of articles not made to assort. The charm of a furnished room is in the special fitness of its appointments, and every room has its own special requirements. Professional decorators take this business on hand, but it is quite within the reach of all persons of taste to make happy selections and adaptations.

EACH color may be made to harmonize with every other, but only by changing tints and tones and gradually bringing them together.

THE new season's carpets display with well defined patterns and skilfully disposed recurring forms very fully pronounced geometrical structure, while large numbers of patterns consist of flowers and stems. Eastern designs, particularly Persian, in modified form make their appearance. All over patterns appear to have had the preference with manufacturers to central and corner ornaments having plain intermediate space. Colors are subdued, but forms are precisely defined and certain features are duly emphasized with stronger colors than on the main portion of the fabric.

WHERE there is no over-mantel or mirror, two wall brackets over the mantel shelf, each supporting an elegant oriental ceramic vase, will be found a good means of embellishment. We may add that two corresponding articles of ornament on the shelf look best when not formally arranged at equal distance from the ends or center. A fine "central piece" will, for the same reason, look best somewhat away from the center. The apparently unstudied arrangement has a certain amount of piquancy.

SEVERAL well-known Western manufacturers of furniture have held back their illustrated catalogues lest the designs should be utilized by some small furniture manufacturers of a practical turn in time for the spring season. It is hard to be robbed of the fruits of artistic ingenuity and of outlay by piratical makers, who have neither brains nor enterprise to get up specialties themselves. Unscrupulous individuals exist in every trade, and any check on their doings is to be welcomed.

THERE are few and very few good books on house-decoration; the exposition of the art requires, however, an illustrated serial like our own, presenting its transitional character and successive phases, for decorative art cannot be expressed in concrete form. Its phases are constantly changing, being the work of subtle minds and trained power of a considerable number of workers, on whom excellence of a high kind, even if not the highest, makes strong calls for versatility.

SHOULD a cornice be too low the coloring of the cornice should be made to blend with that of the wall, and a strong contrast should be placed as far up in cornice as there is a convenient place in the design. If the room is too high the coloring of frieze and cornice may partake of that of the ceiling. In some cases it is possible to continue in the ceiling the same strength of coloring, and so avoid any sharp decoration.

OTHER qualities being equal, the most beautiful art will always be the more costly and elaborate, but the point is to get people to understand the essential qualities of good art, which may be exemplified in cheaper materials and less labored forms.

NO large surfaces in nature are uniform as shown in the melting of a blue sky and the variations in hue of even the smallest leaf. Large flat uniform tints are always unpleasant and are only to be allowed when the surface is broken by various objects.

IN those graceful trifles, those bits of by-play often now seen, occasionally in the work of the decorative artist, there is a show of sound judgment in confining them to comparative trifles, most piquant when merely interdependent features of the main forms.

A MEANS of giving an excellent wax finish to furniture will be welcome to our readers. It is secured by applying from five to several coats of oil paint, the two last being mixed with Japan varnish and ivory white, using pumice-stone for the rubbing down.

IT is a mistake of some decorators to fix all design in a room to one set form so that everything is felt to be stiff and formal, not intended to be home-like, but artistic, showing unnecessary or unsuitable elaboration with reference to the uses of the apartment.

TO make gold leaf strongly adhere to glass, the first coat after being faulted and polished with cotton wool, should be washed once or twice before putting on the second leaf of gold. The less size the better.